United Nations ST/AI/2012/2

Secretariat

30 April 2012

Administrative instruction

Young professionals programme

The Under-Secretary-General for Management, pursuant to section 4.2 of Secretary-General's bulletin ST/SGB/2009/4, and for the purpose of implementing ST/SGB/2011/10, promulgates the following:

Section 1
General provisions

1.1 The examinations for recruitment at the P-1 and P-2 levels, which hereinafter shall be referred to as the young professionals programme examinations, are held annually in particular job families according to the needs of the Organization. Specific arrangements for such examinations shall be announced in advance through the United Nations Intranet (iSeek) and the United Nations Careers portal (https://careers.un.org/). Competitive examinations for recruitment and placement in posts requiring specific language skills in the Professional category are not governed by the present instruction.[1]

1.2 The positions available for recruitment under the young professionals programme shall include all Secretariat positions in the Professional category at the P-1 and P-2 levels established through the regular budget, excluding language posts, and up to 15 per cent of positions at the P-1 and P-2 levels in field operations[2] financed through the regular budget and voluntary contributions.

1.3 In accordance with staff rule 4.16 (b) (ii), recruitment to the Professional category of staff from the General Service and related categories in the United Nations Secretariat shall be made exclusively through competitive examinations.

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[1] Such examinations are governed by ST/AI/1998/7 on competitive examinations for recruitment and placement in posts requiring specific language skills in the Professional category, ST/AI/2000/1 and ST/AI/2003/1 on special conditions for recruitment and placement of candidates successful in competitive examinations for posts requiring specific language skills.

[2] For the purposes of the present administrative issuance, "field operations" are defined as special political missions and field offices of entities of the United Nations Secretariat (the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, the Office of Internal Oversight Services, the Department of Economic and Social Affairs, the United Nations Human Settlements Programme, the United Nations Environment Programme and the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime).

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1.4 The total number of positions that can be filled in a given calendar year by staff members from the General Service and related categories and the Field Service category who successfully pass the young professionals programme examinations as internal applicants shall be up to 10 per cent of the positions available under the programme in a given year.

Section 2
Eligibility

2.1 In assessing the eligibility for the young professionals programme examinations, applicants shall be grouped in two different categories, internal and external applicants.

Internal applicants

2.2 The young professionals programme examinations are open to all staff members serving in the General Service and related categories and the Field Service category, up to and including the FS-5 level, who:

(a) Have a minimum of five years of continuous service in the Secretariat at the time they apply for the examination, excluding any service in separately administered funds or programmes; at the discretion of the Central Examinations Board, breaks in service of not more than six months may be permissible;

(b) Hold a United Nations appointment valid for a minimum of six months from the date the written examination is scheduled to take place;

(c) Have a rating of at least "successfully meets performance expectations" in their last two performance assessments;

(d) Are proficient in either English or French;

(e) Meet the minimum educational criterion set out in section 2.8 of the present instruction and any other requirements stipulated in the announcement of the examinations.

2.3 Staff members who are eligible to take the young professionals programme examination under section 2.2 above, and who meet the minimum educational criterion set out in section 2.8 below, may apply to take the examination in a maximum of two job families in a given year.

2.4 Staff members who, by 31 December 1989, had served in the Secretariat for a minimum of five years are exempt from the minimum educational criterion set out in section 2.8 below and shall be eligible to apply for the examination in any of the job families in which it is held in a given year provided that they meet the criteria in section 2.2 (a) through (d) and hold post-secondary academic qualifications recognized by the United Nations. In the event that the staff members also meet the minimum educational criterion set out in section 2.8 below, they may apply to take the examination in the second job family for which their degree is accepted.

External applicants

2.5 The young professionals programme examinations are open to all individuals who:

(a) Are nationals of one of the Member States participating in the examination in a particular year;

(b) Are not more than 32 years old on 31 December of the year of the examination;

(c) Are proficient in either English or French;

(d) Meet the minimum educational criterion set out in section 2.8 of the present instruction and any other requirements stipulated in the announcement of the examinations.

2.6 In addition, as a transitional measure for the young professionals programme examinations conducted in 2011 and 2012, and subject to any further decision by the General Assembly, staff members of any age serving in the General Service and related categories and in the Field Service category, up to and including the FS-5 level, may take the examination as external candidates, provided that they meet the following additional criteria:

(a) Hold a United Nations appointment valid for a minimum of six months from the date the written examination is scheduled to take place;

(b) Have a rating of at least "successfully meets performance expectations" in their last available performance assessments.

General eligibility provisions

2.7 Pursuant to staff rule 4.3, staff members who have been legally accorded nationality status by more than one State shall be considered nationals of the Member State recognized by the Secretary-General as their nationality for the purposes of employment at the United Nations. Staff members who wish to apply under a nationality other than the nationality recognized by the Organization may do so, but they shall not be allowed to revert to their previously recognized nationality if successful in the examination.

2.8 Unless otherwise specified, the minimum educational eligibility criterion is a first-level three-year university degree (Bachelor's degree or its equivalent) conferred on the applicant and recognized by the United Nations, and acceptable for the job family for which the applicant has applied. University degrees accepted for specific job families shall be provided in the annual announcement of the examinations through the United Nations Intranet (iSeek) and the United Nations Careers portal.[3]

Section 3
Applications

3.1 In order to apply for the young professionals programme examinations, applicants shall complete the profile and application sections provided on the United Nations Careers portal. Applicants shall submit all required documentation by applying to the job opening advertised under the job family for which they wish to

[3] An associate degree or equivalent shall not be considered as meeting the requirements under section 2 of the present instruction. An associate degree is a two-year post-secondary education degree, which does not qualify its holder for direct application to advanced study programmes.

be considered by the deadline indicated in the announcement made through the United Nations Intranet (iSeek) and the Careers portal.

3.2 External applicants may only apply to one job family. Submitting applications for more than one job family shall result in automatic disqualification.

3.3 Staff members in the General Service and related categories and in the Field Service category, up to and including the FS-5 level, who meet the eligibility criteria specified in section 2.2 and 2.6 above may apply for the young professionals programme examination as internal and external candidates.

Section 4
Review of applications

Review of applications

4.1 The Office of Human Resources Management shall review all timely and complete applications submitted by external applicants to determine their eligibility. If the number of applications received from individuals of the same nationality in a given job family eligible under section 2.5 above exceeds operational capacity, the Office shall consider those applicants whose qualifications exceed the minimum eligibility criteria detailed in section 2.5 in order to determine the most qualified applicants. For that purpose, the Office will consider additional qualifications and expertise, including, but not limited to, additional first-level university degree(s), advanced university degree(s), work experience relevant to the job family, knowledge of both working languages of the United Nations (English and French) and knowledge of the additional official languages of the United Nations (Arabic, Chinese, Russian and Spanish).

4.2 The decision by the Office of Human Resources Management determining which non-staff members are most qualified to take the young professionals programme examination shall be final.

4.3 The Office of Human Resources Management shall review all timely and complete applications submitted by staff members under section 2.2 above. The Central Examinations Board, described in section 6 below, shall, in consultation with the Office, determine the eligibility of staff members to take the young professionals programme examination. All staff members serving in the General Service and related categories and in the Field Service category, up to and including the FS-5 level, who meet the eligibility criteria under sections 2.2 or 2.6 above shall be invited to take the examination.

4.4 Late and/or incomplete applications shall not be considered under any circumstances.

4.5 All applicants shall receive notification, by e-mail, regarding the outcome of their application to take the young professionals programme examination. Unless otherwise specified herein, no further information on the decision taken by the Office of Human Resources Management shall be provided to applicants.

Appeals

4.6 Staff members who have been found to be ineligible to take the young professionals programme examination shall be informed of the reasons for the decision. Staff members who have cause to believe that they have been unfairly

excluded from participating in the examination may appeal to the Central Examinations Board for review if they applied as internal applicants, and to the Office of Human Resources Management if they applied as external applicants. Appeals must be received by the Central Examinations Board at Headquarters or the Office of Human Resources Management, as applicable, within 10 calendar days of the receipt of the decision. Late appeals will not be considered.

4.7 The Central Examinations Board or the Office of Human Resources Management, as applicable, will normally respond within 10 calendar days of receipt of an appeal.

Section 5
Young professionals programme examinations

5.1 Information on the format of the examinations shall be communicated to all applicants by e-mail or they shall be included in the announcement for the upcoming examinations through the United Nations Intranet (iSeek) and the United Nations Careers portal. Sample examination papers shall also be made available on the Careers portal.

5.2 The examinations shall comprise:

(a) Written examination (85 per cent of the mark): the written examination shall consist of: (i) a general paper, which tests drafting skills and general knowledge of international affairs; and (ii) a specialized paper, which tests the substantive knowledge of the particular job family for which the examinee is being tested. All examinees in all job families shall complete the same general paper. The general paper is eliminatory, and only examinees successful in that part of the examination shall have their specialized paper marked;

(b) Oral examination (15 per cent of the mark): the oral examination shall consist of an interview at which examinees shall be required to answer questions designed to ascertain whether they possess the United Nations core values and the competencies necessary for positions in the relevant job family. At the discretion of the Office of Human Resources Management, examinees who fail to sit for the oral examination after two attempts have been made to schedule an interview will be considered disqualified.

5.3 In accordance with General Assembly resolutions 35/210 and 37/235 D, the young professionals programme examinations may be taken in any of the six official languages of the United Nations (Arabic, Chinese, English, French, Russian and Spanish), with due regard to the requisite proficiency in one of the working languages (English and French) of the United Nations Secretariat. Consequently, the general paper of the written examination must be taken in either English or French and the specialized paper may be taken in any one of the United Nations official languages. The oral examination must be taken in either English or French.

5.4 The written and oral examinations shall normally follow a similar format in all job families. However, the Specialized Boards of Examiners, described in section 7 of the present instruction, for particular job families shall have the right to modify the format of both the written and oral examinations in order to test knowledge, skills and attributes of specific relevance to that area of work. Any change in the format shall be communicated to all examinees through the United Nations Careers portal prior to the actual examination.

5.5 Eligible applicants shall be informed through the United Nations Careers portal of the exact date, time and location of the written examination. Estimated dates regarding the oral examination shall also be posted on the Careers portal. In order to preserve their anonymity, examinees shall be provided with unique identification numbers and shall not be identified by name.

5.6 The written examination for all job families shall be administered on the same day at identified examination centres around the world.

5.7 Staff members who have been invited to take young professionals programme examinations in two job families, in accordance with sections 2.3 and 2.4 above, shall be required to complete the general and both specialized examination papers on the same day. In such cases, staff members shall only be required to take one general paper, which shall be considered for both job families.

5.8 The specialized paper consists of several sections. In the event that there are a great number of examinees whose specialized papers need to be marked in a given job family, only examinees who score high enough in a specific section of the specialized paper, as determined by the Specialized Board of Examiners prior to the conduct of the examinations, shall have their entire papers marked.

5.9 Following the assessment of the written papers, the Specialized Board of Examiners shall transmit to the Central Examinations Board, for review and endorsement, the results of the written examination and a list of the examinees to be convoked to sit the oral examination for each job family. Upon receipt of the recommendation of the Board, the Office of Human Resources Management shall communicate in writing to all examinees the outcome of their performance in the written examination and invite the examinees approved by the Board to take the oral examination.

5.10 Only those examinees who successfully pass the oral examination may be considered for recommendation by the Specialized Board of Examiners for appointment under the young professionals programme. Once the final recommendations regarding the successful candidates are approved, the Office of Human Resources Management shall inform the examinees accordingly. The recommendations concerning the qualification of examinees to perform at the junior Professional level and the final decision shall be made confidentially, with full respect for anonymity.

Section 6
Central Examinations Board

6.1 The Central Examinations Board is composed of eight members appointed by the Secretary-General: a chair and a co-chair selected from among staff serving at Headquarters; at least three members nominated by the representatives of staff, one of whom shall be from a duty station away from Headquarters; and at least three members nominated by the Assistant Secretary-General for Human Resources Management, one of whom shall be from a third duty station. Members of the Board shall be appointed for a term of three examination cycles. Decisions taken by the Board shall require a quorum of five members. The Board shall have a non-voting ex officio member representing the Assistant Secretary-General for Human Resources Management and a secretary. The Secretary-General shall also appoint alternates to all of these positions, with the exception of the positions of chair and co-chair.

6.2 The Central Examinations Board has the following responsibilities:

(a) To ensure that the examinations are conducted in accordance with the present instruction;

(b) To determine the eligibility of internal applicants to sit for the examination and review and respond to their appeals with respect to contested decisions;

(c) To review staff members' complaints regarding the examination process;

(d) To review the recommendations of the Specialized Boards of Examiners concerning the conduct of the written examination and as to which examinees shall be convoked to the oral examination;

(e) To transmit the list of the recommended candidates for approval for recruitment under the young professionals programme to the Assistant Secretary-General for Human Resources Management;

(f) To take note of the information submitted to it by the Office of Human Resources Management on the recruitment of all successful candidates in each calendar year;

(g) To make recommendations to the Secretary-General, where necessary, on possible improvements or changes for future examinations.

6.3 Staff members serving on the Central Examination Board shall be released by their respective departments for a period sufficient to discharge their functions as members of the Board.

Section 7
Specialized Boards of Examiners

7.1 The members of the Specialized Boards of Examiners for each job family, who shall be appointed by the Assistant Secretary-General for Human Resources Management, shall normally be composed of staff members of the United Nations Secretariat, although staff members of the specialized agencies, consultants, outside experts or retirees may also be included if it is deemed necessary. Each Specialized Board of Examiners shall consist of a chair elected by the members of the Board and members nominated by the heads of departments and offices. Each Specialized Board of Examiners shall have a non-voting ex officio member representing the Assistant Secretary-General for Human Resources Management.

7.2 Staff members serving on a Specialized Board of Examiners shall be released by their departments on a full-time basis to serve on the Board for a period sufficient to discharge their functions as a Board member. This assignment shall be part of their workplans and shall be recognized in their performance evaluations.

7.3 Under the overall responsibility of the Central Examinations Board, the Specialized Boards of Examiners have the following responsibilities:

(a) To contribute to the preparation of the specialized part of the written examination;

(b) To mark the specialized part of the written examination, with full respect for the anonymity of the examinees;

(c) To transmit to the Central Examinations Board the results of the written examinations and a list of the examinees to be convoked to sit for the oral examination for each job family;

(d) To conduct and evaluate the oral examination;

(e) To transmit to the Central Examinations Board the results of the written and oral examination, including a list of recommended candidates for approval for appointment under the young professionals programme: all recommendations transmitted to the Board shall be confidential, with full respect for anonymity of the examinees;

(f) To make recommendations to the Central Examinations Board, where necessary, on possible improvements or changes for future examinations.

Section 8
Selection and appointment of successful candidates

8.1 Candidates successful in the young professionals programme examinations shall be eligible for consideration for appointment at the P-1 or P-2 levels in the Secretariat, depending upon their qualifications and the availability of posts. Candidates appointed to positions earmarked for the young professionals programme shall receive fixed-term appointments for two years, after which they shall be granted continuing appointments, subject to satisfactory performance, in accordance with staff rule 4.14.

8.2 The Office of Human Resources Management shall review the possibilities for the selection and appointment of all candidates on a regular basis. When a vacancy occurs, the Office shall electronically release the list and profiles of the candidates who have successfully passed the young professionals programme examination in a relevant job family to the programme manager for consideration and selection.

8.3 Programme managers shall be required to select a candidate for appointment from the list and profiles released by the Office of Human Resources Management within 10 working days upon receipt of the list. Programme managers may further assess candidates in order to determine which candidate is best suited for the functions.

8.4 Should a candidate refuse to undertake any further assessment conducted by the programme manager or reject an offer of appointment made by the Office of Human Resources Management in the form of a formal letter of offer, the candidate shall be considered to have withdrawn his or her candidacy from the young professionals programme and shall be removed from the reserve list, indicated in section 9 of the present instruction.

8.5 In the event that a programme manager does not communicate a selection decision to the Office of Human Resources Management within 10 working days, the Office itself shall take the selection decision.

8.6 Candidates shall be informed of positions for which they have been selected. In cases where they have been simultaneously selected for more than one position, they shall be informed of the positions for which they have been selected and shall be requested to indicate a preference within seven calendar days starting from the date of receipt of the last proposal.

8.7 Candidates may be required to serve at any of the duty stations of the United Nations Secretariat worldwide. Candidates shall be expected to serve for a minimum of two years in that position and at that duty station before being considered for appointment to another position. The second assignment for external candidates shall be at a different duty station.

8.8 Candidates who are initially appointed at the P-1 level shall be promoted to a position at the P-2 level following a minimum of two years of satisfactory performance and depending on the availability of posts.

8.9 Candidates whose initial assignments are at the P-2 level may apply for positions at the P-3 level through the staff selection system after successfully completing their initial appointment of two years.

8.10 Candidates who have successfully passed the young professionals programme examination may apply for positions advertised through the United Nations Careers portal that are not earmarked for the programme. Section 8.1 above shall not apply to candidates who are appointed to such positions unless they are subsequently selected against a position earmarked for the programme within two calendar years following the conclusion of the examination.

8.11 Candidates whose performance is not satisfactory shall be separated upon expiration of their fixed-term appointment.

8.12 Pursuant to staff rule 4.3, for the purposes of the Staff Regulations and Rules of the United Nations, the nationality of successful candidates shall be the nationality of the State under which they applied for the young professionals programme examination. Candidates who are successful in the examination who hold more than one nationality shall not be allowed to change their nationality for the purposes of their employment at the United Nations during their career with the Organization.

8.13 Staff members who are considered eligible under sections 2.2 and 2.6 above, and who successfully pass the young professionals programme examination, shall be considered as external candidates and shall be subject to mandatory geographical rotation as set out in section 8.7 above.

Additional provisions applicable to successful internal candidates

8.14 Subject to section 1.4 above, in the event that no internal candidates have been appointed to positions earmarked for the young professionals programme by 1 January of the second year following the completion of the examination, the Assistant Secretary-General for Human Resources Management shall automatically assign the top-ranked internal candidates to the first positions that become available in the job family in which they were successful.

8.15 When internal candidates are selected from the list of successful candidates or from the reserve list to fill positions earmarked for the young professionals programme, subject to approval by the Office of Human Resources Management, the filling of the position shall count towards the 10 per cent threshold referred to in section 1.4 above. The Office is responsible for monitoring the number of appointments, for informing the Central Examinations Board of the recruitment of candidates in each calendar year and for alerting the Board as soon as this threshold has been reached.

Section 9
Reserve list

9.1 Successful candidates shall be placed on the reserve list pending selection. The reserve list shall be valid for a period of two calendar years from the conclusion of the examination in a particular job family.

9.2 Candidates who have not been appointed to a position earmarked for the young professionals programme or selected for another position in accordance with section 8.10 above, shall be removed from the reserve list after two calendar years. The Office of Human Resources Management shall notify the candidates and the relevant Member States accordingly. Individuals wishing to reapply to the young professionals programme will be considered as new applicants.

9.3 In order to ensure that all job openings in a particular job family are filled in an expedited manner, the number of candidates placed on the reserve list may include up to an additional 10 per cent of the number of candidates. The Assistant Secretary-General for Human Resources Management shall determine the additional number on the basis of the recommendations from the Specialized Board of Examiners, as endorsed by the Central Examinations Board.

9.4 Programme managers may select candidates from the reserve list for positions not earmarked for the young professionals programme. Candidates on the reserve list may also apply for positions advertised through the United Nations Careers portal that are not earmarked for the programme. Section 8.1 above shall not apply to candidates who are appointed to such positions unless they are subsequently selected against a position earmarked for the young professionals programme within two calendar years following the conclusion of the examinations.

Section 10
Professional development support

10.1 Upon placement, candidates shall be supported by a series of structured programmes aimed at developing their potential as adaptable and diversified staff members, ready to respond to the evolving mandates of the Organization.

10.2 Prior to assuming their functions, candidates shall be required to complete a two-week orientation and training programme. Candidates who are unable to participate in or do not successfully complete the orientation and training programmes, save in exceptional circumstances, will have their offers of appointment rescinded and they shall not be considered for selection or placement to other positions under the young professionals programme.

10.3 Managers will ensure that each candidate has a defined workplan, performance objectives and training and learning plans upon assuming his or her functions. Candidates will be expected to serve on two different assignments, will receive a structured performance assessment and will participate in learning and development programmes.

10.4 All placed candidates shall join a global network of peer professionals for future support and knowledge-sharing in their respective areas. Each participant shall be assigned a mentor, who will provide further guidance to ensure successful and accelerated integration into the Organization.

Section 11
Final provisions

11.1 The provisions for selection and appointment set out in section 8 above shall be assessed after two years of implementation. Should the total number of internal candidates placed be lower than the 10 per cent limit approved by the General Assembly for two consecutive years, the placement process described in the present instruction shall be reviewed with a view to its improvement.

11.2 Administrative instruction ST/AI/2010/7, entitled "Competitive examination for recruitment to the Professional category of staff members from other categories" and administrative instruction ST/AI/2010/8, entitled "Conditions under which individuals may take national competitive recruitment examinations" are hereby abolished.

11.3 The present instruction shall enter into force on the date of its issuance.

(*Signed*) Warren **Sach**
Officer-in-Charge
Department of Management